PREFACE

This book came about because, as a historian, I have long felt the lack of a dependable and informative history of one discrete Aztec state. Books written up to now on the Aztecs have mingled bits of several histories along with heavy doses of the culture of all the Aztec states together, as if the many Aztec states had had no separate existence of their own. I have chosen to concentrate on that one Aztec state with the most abundant records and with certainly the most renown, Mexico.

This is a political history; it depicts customs, cults, and myths only insofar as these are necessary to clarify the narrative. Those who wish to immerse themselves in the social, literary, technological and economic details of Aztec life—all of which is of the greatest interest—are advised to go to general surveys of the culture, of which there are many.

The story of how a certain people comported themselves in their years on earth is then the essential task here, and if the story falters or the narrative becomes muddy, I have failed. I should particularly like to draw attention to the fact that there is a theme to this history: the keen realization by the Mexica of the illegitimacy of their claim to the land and their expectation of the proprietorial return of the god. This theme appears throughout Mexican history—in the origination legends, in the final catastrophe that befell the state, and in all the fury and arrogance of the interim years.

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To the uninitiated, Nahuatl names appear unpronounceable, and where there was any choice I have used their shorter forms or those least offensive to the untutored eye, such as Cuacuauhtzin for the more correct Cuacuauhpitzahuac. All Nahuatl words are accented on the penultimate syllable. The letter x is pronounced like sh in English.

The records relied on in writing this history have been the well-known primary and secondary sources, ranging from the Anales de Tlatilulco down through Veytia and Clavigero. Tertiary sources (from Orozco y Berra to Barlow, Krickeberg, Kirchhoff, Piña-Chan, Bernal, et al.) have been read and very occasionally cited. The Handbook of Middle American Indians has aided me in many matters of geography and culture. Volumes 10 and 11 of that series were issued when this work was in proofs. Consequently, none of the pertinent material there could be assimilated for this writing. This is regrettable, particularly in the case of articles such as that by Charles Gibson on the geographical extension of the Aztec empire. By and large, however, the work rests directly on the sixteenth-, seventeenth-, and eighteenth-century sources. The quantity of such sources, both published and in manuscript, is vast and I make no claim to have consulted more than the essential works.

Due to the sporadic and somewhat unusual circumstances of notetaking in preparation for this book, it has inadvertently happened that two or three primary sources used have been cited in the bibliography and notes in more than one translation or edition. This will appear awkward to the eye of the critic, but it in no wise lessens the work, for, in regard to each statement of fact, the citation will lead the interested party to the proper source.

A word on chronology. In this area I have been immeasurably helped by Dr. Howard F. Cline, late director of the Hispanic Foundation of the Library of Congress. He not only read this work in manuscript and offered valuable suggestions, but he allowed me access to an article of his on Christian-Aztec synchronology, which is to be published in the *Journal des Américainistes* in Paris. This article and his own personal advice convinced me that the traditional founding date for Tenochtitlan (1325) was in error and that Kirchhoff's date of 1369-1370 was correct. (See Paul Kirchhoff, "The Mexican Calendar and

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the Founding of Tenochtitlan-Tlatilulco," New York Academy of Science, *Transactions*, series 2, 12:126–132.) After making this fundamental correction, all surrounding dates could then be more accurately placed. Dr. Cline also brought to my attention the latest datings of Teotihuacan and Tula, which I have also incorporated in this work. Because Dr. Cline, at the time of his death, was preparing a book to be published by the University of Texas Press, which will discuss this antecedent material at length, I have only briefly touched on it here.

We differed on one important point. Dr. Cline (private communication) set 1380 as the true date for the founding of Tlatilulco, eleven years after the founding of Tenochtitlan. I cannot give a precise date to that founding, but I believe it to have been several years before 1369 and I have so depicted it in these pages.

I wish to express my gratitude for the help given me by Dr. Cline and for his interest in this book. His untimely death was a very great loss to the scholarly world.

The three maps in this volume have been painstakingly drawn by Mr. Geza Knipfer of The University of Texas at Austin; his skill is greatly appreciated.

My efforts to gain competence in the field of Aztec studies have been supported by a grant from the Board of Higher Education of the Presbyterian Church. Additionally my own institution, Eckerd College (formerly Florida Presbyterian College), has taken a real and continuing interest in both the inception and the realization of this study and with numerous grants of money has supported my library acquisitions and sent me to Mexico to carry on my research. I received gracious help in an important matter of translation from Dr. A. J. O. Anderson of San Diego State College and Dr. Charles Dibble of the University of Utah. It is a pleasure to acknowledge this aid and to express my gratitude.